

MRS. THOMAS SAY

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While we were gathering material for our "Thomas Say, Early American Naturalist," published in 1931, certain facts accumulated about Mrs. Say, and these were set forth in Chapter XVI. Recently Miss E. L. Sistare, of New York City, kindly allowed us to examine a small bundle of papers and drawings that had once been the property of Mrs. Say, her great-aunt, and as a result we are able to publish the following notes. Miss Sistare has presented the material to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

The material for the most part consists of some 27 sheets of pencil drawings of shells, made by Mrs. Say for the "American Conchology." Some are colored and some carry the dates 1827, 1833 and 1834, in addition to names and localities. There are also five plates of shells, most of them having been engraved by Tiebout, and various letters principally from officers of the Academy addressed to Mrs. Say. These letters are summarized as follows:

On February 10, 1845, the secretary of the Académie Impériale des sciences de Russie addressed Mrs. Say, in French, from Saint Petersburg, thanking her for a collection of fresh water shells from America.

On December 15, 1855, Mr. D. D. Owen wrote to Mrs. Say from New Harmony telling her not to worry about the cemetery lot, as he had purchased it with the intention of retaining it for the purpose for which it had been set apart. An unsuccessful effort had been made to prevent its sale, but so long as Mr. Owen purchased it in order to retain it as a private cemetery everything came out all right.

David Dale Owen was, of course, the son of Robert Owen, the social reformer. He went to New Harmony with his father in 1828 and later returned to Europe and studied geology and natural history. He returned to New Harmony in 1833 and two years later graduated from the Ohio medical college. In 1837 he was employed by the Indiana legislature to make a geological

survey of Indiana. In 1839 he was in the service of the United States government and worked on the mineral lands of Iowa. From 1854 to 1857 he was State Geologist of Kentucky, and from 1859 until his death in New Harmony on November 13, 1860, he was State Geologist of Indiana. His various published reports are matters of record.

On April 14, 1863, Mr. E. T. Cresson wrote to Mrs. Say on stationery headed "Hall of the Entomological Society, No. 518 South 13th Street, Philadelphia," requesting a photograph of her, so that it could be placed in the album of the Society along side of their portrait of her husband.

On April 21, 1863, Mr. Cresson acknowledged with thanks Mrs. Say's offer to contribute certain works to the Library of the Society and said that "Insectes d'Afrique et d'Amerique, par Palisot de Beauvois" would be a very desirable addition.

Mrs. Say apparently supplied a photograph of herself, for on July 29, 1863, Mr. Cresson acknowledged the receipt of it with thanks and in addition wrote as follows: "Could you put us in the way of procuring a good (painted) portrait of Mr. Say, of as late a date as possible? We are extremely anxious to obtain one to hang up in our meeting room. Any information on the subject will be thankfully received."

Mrs. Say was apparently living at Newburgh, N. Y., in 1863, as Mr. Frank Knight, recording secretary of the Society, acknowledged on May 12, 1863, the receipt of several works on entomology, which she had donated.

At the January 2, 1868, meeting of the Conchological Section of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Mrs. Say was elected a member, according to the notice sent to her at Newburgh, N. Y., by S. R. Roberts, Recorder. However, her certificate of membership was not mailed to her until December 1, 1878, as in a letter of that date Mr. S. R. Roberts explains that the delay was due to the difficulty of obtaining the signatures of some officers. The certificate is signed by Isaac Lea, Director; George W. Tryon, Jr., Vice-Director; E. R. Beadle, Secretary, and S. R. Roberts, Recorder.

Dr. Isaac Lea was the distinguished paleontologist and conchologist who was elected a member of the Academy in 1815.

He was president of the Academy from 1858 to 1863 and was in his time the greatest authority on fresh-water mollusks. He died in 1886 at the age of 95.

George W. Tryon, Jr., was a member of the Academy from 1859 until his death in 1888, and an active and distinguished conchologist. He was editor of the *American Journal of Conchology* and of the first 10 volumes of the First Series and the first four volumes of the Second Series of the *Manual of Conchology*, which he personally financed and which he bequeathed to the Conchological Section of the Academy.

The Rev. E. R. Beadle was a diligent collector of shells and minerals and a member of the Academy from 1866 to 1879, when he died at the age of 66.

S. Raymond Roberts was elected a member of the Academy in 1866 and at the time of his death in 1928 was the oldest surviving member. He published on shells and was the author of a portion of Volume VII of the First Series of the *Manual of Conchology*. He had an important series of the family Cypræidæ, in which he specialized, principally as a collector. He was treasurer of the Conchological Section for many years and also treasurer of the *Manual of Conchology* until his death.

In 1871 Mrs. Say was living at 9 East 48th Street, New York City, as a notice from the American Entomological Society was sent to her on May 4th of that year by Charles A. Blake, corresponding secretary, thanking her for three volumes of "Say's American Entomology," and another one on September 23, 1871, for her present of four volumes of "Donovan's British Insects." Other letters from Mr. Blake to Mrs. Say, dated Philadelphia, Pa., December 19, 1874; May 1, 1875, and August 4, 1877, thank her for her photograph, a box of Neuroptera, and a "book of butterflies."

When Mrs. Say was 70 years old, or in September, 1870, she paid a visit to Philadelphia and visited the home of J. E. Mitchell, at Chestnut Hill. A month later, or on October 20, 1870, Mr. Mitchell sent her a photograph of his home and a historical statement about Indian Rock, at Chestnut Hill, which he had promised her. Mr. J. E. Mitchell was a member of the Academy from 1874 until 1887, when he died at the age of 70. Ap-

parently he was interested in the history of the Academy and in those connected with it during its early days.

Among the interesting papers that Mrs. Say had saved is a little slip listing some of the plants that grew in the Say garden at New Harmony. This is dated "N. H.—1833—" and is quoted in full as follows:

Bulbous and Tuberous roots now in our garden—

Leucojum vernum
Hyacinthus orientalis
Hyacinthus botryoides
Lilium superbum or *canadense*
Iris pumila and two or three native species
Pæonia officinalis (double red)
Narcissus pseudo-narcissus
Narcissus very double yellow
Narcissus poeticus
Lilium candidum

Succulent plants in our garden—

Cactus flagelliformis
Cactus r'tangularis
Cactus fillamentosa?
Cactus opuntia
Mesembryantheum cordatum

N.H.—1833—

Although Thomas Say's attendance at the Wistar Parties has been recorded, it was of interest to find among the papers an invitation addressed to "T. Say, Esq., Post Office," reading as follows: "Dr. Hare requests the pleasure of Mr. Say's company on Saturday Evening next. (Wistar Party) Dec. 18th, 1822."

On the back of this invitation Thomas Say wrote a letter, dated December 18, 1822, in which shells are discussed and also the unethical conduct of a person named Vitry, who had apparently failed to return borrowed material to the rightful owner. From the text of the letter, the name of the addressee being omitted, one gathers that it may have been sent to a French conchologist and also, in view of its abbreviated and crowded writing, that it may be simply an extended draft of Say's reply. In one corner of the invitation part of the letter, Mrs. Say wrote a little note which does not seem to refer to anything with which we are familiar.

Of entomological interest are the original paintings by T. R. Peale of the three insects on Plate 42 of Say's "American Entomology." These are *Pompilus formosus*, *P. unifasciatus* and *P. terminatus*. Mrs. Say kept these among her possessions and it is good to relate that after so many years they will now find a permanent home in the Academy.

Mrs. Say, in addition to her skill at sketching shells, tried her hand at engraving, and there have come down to us several prints showing her early attempts. On one which is reproduced here-with, Mrs. Say had written below: "Upon the death of our Engraver 1834 (April) I thought I could acquire a knowledge of engraving and practiced by myself.—L. W. Say." On the back of another print of a shell, Mrs. Say wrote as follows: "First attempt. August, 1834. L. W. Say. I could have learned etching very soon—but an engraver was procured." The en-



Figure 1. Engraved by Mrs. Say.



Figure 2. Sketch of A. Maclure's dog, made by James Morton.

graver who died was Cornelius Tiebout, well known in engraving circles.

Another sketch, which Mrs. Say saved, although not of scientific interest but of considerable human interest, is that of the head of A. Maclure's dog Flora. Alexander Maclure was the brother of William Maclure, generous friend of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences and its president from 1817 to 1840. Beneath the sketch is the statement that it was made by James Morton, son of Dr. S. G. Morton of Philadelphia. Dr. Samuel G. Morton was the well-known Philadelphia physician, author and one-time president of the Academy. His son James St. Clair was born in Philadelphia on September 24, 1829. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1851 and

was assistant professor of engineering there at one time. He also held various military positions, explored certain parts of Central America and was killed during the Civil War.

The following information relative to Mrs. Say's family was compiled from the notes which she made and which were found among her papers. It is of course incomplete, but it may be useful to those interested in the Sistare family.

“Gabriel Sistare, from whom descended the Sistare family in New London, Connecticut, was born at Barcelona in the kingdom of Spain, May 1, 1726. He arrived in this town 9th October, 1771, in his own ship, Montsaratta, dismasted in a gale of wind, bound from the Havana to Cadiz, with a cargo of Spices and Sugar. In consequence of contrary winds he was driven on this Coast, and on the 28th September, 1771, he spoke an American vessel, from which, he took a pilot, and on the 9th October arrived safely in New London; he spent the remainder of his life there. He died on the 21st February, 1795, and his remains were interred in City burying ground, over which place stands a Stone Table, on which is inscribed his death and character.

“Joseph Sistare, son of Gabriel and Eliza Sistare, was born on the 22d April, 1774, in New London—he died at the same City of consumption, on Friday, 21st August, 1829, aged 55



Figure 3. Mrs. Say's early attempt at engraving.

years, three months and one day. He died at the house of his father-in-law, John Way, and was buried in the New London burying ground.

“Nancy Way, daughter of John and Lucy Way, was born in N. London on Friday, 6th of October, 1775. She died at the house of her daughter, Delia Ann Hilger, wife of Maurice Hilger, in October, 1860.

“On Sunday evening, the 1st February, 1795, Joseph Sistare and Nancy were married by Rev. Henry Channing, Pastor of the First Ecclesiastical Church in New London.”

Lucy Way Sistare, who later became Mrs. Thomas Say, was one of 10 children born of this union, the others being John Way Sistare, Leonard Sistare, Ovaneto Sistare, Horace Sistare, George King Sistare, Delia Ann Sistare, Mary Holt Sistare who was born in New York City in 1812 but who died when only two weeks old, Frances Elizabeth Sistare who was born on Monday, September 5, 1814, at half-past eleven p. m. and who died on November 8, 1871, at the home of her husband, Henry Ball, 9 East 48th Street, New York, and Sarah Lord Sistare who was born on November 4, 1816.

Mention has been made of the residence of Mrs. Say at 9 East 48th Street in 1871, and from the above account it is noted that this was the home of her sister and brother-in-law. Another note refers to the marriage on June 16, 1868, of Virginia C. Sistare and Warren Fisher at the home of Henry Ball, corner of 48th Street and Fifth Avenue, New York.

It is noted that Horace Sistare married Lucy Scarbrough, at whose death on November 29, 1840, there were two children surviving: Frances Elizabeth Sistare, born January 30, 1835, and Alice Douglas Sistare, born January 15, 1838. Four other children born of this marriage died in childhood.

An obituary notice of George K. Sistare refers to him as one of the oldest and best-known bankers and brokers in New York, who confined his transactions chiefly to choice investments for institutions and private persons and to negotiating state and municipal loans, especially of New York and Brooklyn. He died on January 25, 1880, at his residence at 104 West 43d Street, in the seventy-first year of his age. He was survived by a widow

and four children, two daughters and two sons, W. H. M. and George K. Sistare, who succeeded to his business two years prior to his death.

In addition to the foregoing, Mrs. Say saved other little notes, of interest only to herself, and a printed "List of the Linnean Society of London, 1830," containing the name of her husband as a foreign member.

In closing we wish to express our thanks to Miss E. L. Sistare for saving the manuscripts and drawings and for her kindness in making them available to us. And we are grateful also to Mr. James A. G. Rehn for supplying information about some of the officers of the Academy.